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ABSTRACT

Research related to identification of delinquents, causes of delinquency, and effective intervention to stop delinquency is reviewed in this paper. In summary, the review indicates that adolescent problems appear to be concentrated among those disadvantaged in a variety of ways. Further, the reviewed literature indicates that biases in the justice system tend to exaggerate representation of minority groups and members of the lower class as criminals. Whereas the evidence about who is delinquent leads to reasonably clear conclusions, the evidence about why there is delinquency has largely failed to support previously entertained beliefs. Theories of status-frustration, labelling theory, and Freudian theory have been shown inadequate in accounting for and explaining crime and aggressive behavior. On the other hand, among the studies reviewed, a variety of measures of parental rejection and parental aggression appear to be consistent in showing a positive correlation with crime. Caution has been recommended in interpreting these relationships. It is concluded that (1) perhaps the most significant result of recent research has been the discovery that programs designed to help adolescents actually risk damaging those they are designed to serve, and (2) well-considered professional opinions should not be substituted for pilot programs and mandatory evaluations as preliminary steps for instituting larger projects designed to help adolescents. (Author/RH)

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ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH: DELINQUENCY

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ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH: DELINQUENCY

Delinquency, as both a social problem and a symptom of other problems, is the most prevalent sign of difficulties among adolescent Americans. Such terms as "acting out," "character disorder," and "sociopathy" are the psychiatric diagnoses given those adolescents that the lay community identifies as delinquent. Truancy, fighting, and theft – common *delinquent* acts – are presenting symptoms for almost every form of mental illness found in adolescents (Anthony, 1968; Burks & Harrison, 1962; Gersten *et al.*, 1979; Lewis *et al.*, 1979; Robins, 1966; Spiegel, 1967; Weiner, 1980; Werner & Smith, 1977).

The role delinquency has played in adolescent problems has resulted in an abundance of research. This research can be organized around three questions: Who are delinquents? Why is there delinquency? and How can delinquency be stopped?

Studies that answer the question "Who are delinquents?" ordinarily have used one of two approaches; these seem to produce conflicting conclusions. One approach is based on the evidence available through official records of arrests, convictions, or imprisonment; the other, on self-reports of delinquent behavior. Use of official records for identification of delinquents generally has indicated proportionate overrepresentation of the poor and of blacks (Ganzer & Sarason, 1973; Garrett & Short, 1975; Meade, 1973; Wolfgang *et al.*, 1972). On the other hand, when teenagers have been asked to report their own delinquencies, the results often have failed to confirm those relationships found in official statistics (Bachman, 1970; Clark & Wenninger, 1962; Dentler & Monroe, 1961; Gold & Petronio, 1980; Nye, 1958; Tittle *et al.*, 1978).

Classical theories about crime were inspired by official statistics; they suggest how delinquency develops in response to membership in the lower class (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Cohen, 1955; Merton, 1949; Miller, 1958; Sutherland, 1939; Wolfgang, 1958). Self-report studies showing crime rates to be similar across social classes, however, raised doubts about the validity of these theories.

If self-reports yielded accurate information on who are delinquents, then delinquency was as common in the middle class as in the lower class. Data from official records overrepresented the underprivileged, it was argued, because the criminal justice system was biased in its response to crime. Several studies sought documentation of a bias that could account for the discrepancies between official records and self-reports on delinquencies.

One of the earliest studies focused on deliberations by the police when they determine whether to book a suspect. Piliavin and Briar (1964) discovered that this decision depended upon the demeanor of suspected juveniles. Since demeanor and class could be shown to be correlated, their evidence fueled further studies.

Hohenstein (1969) investigated the decision to prosecute or release in relation to the accused's prior record, race, sex, and age; the victim's race, sex, age, and willingness to prosecute; and the seriousness of the offense. He found that regardless of the offender's race, if the victim did not want to prosecute, the case rarely was pursued.

If the defendant had a history of prior offenses and the victim made no statement about prosecution, and the offense was not serious, race contributed to the decision to prosecute.

Black (1970) organized reports from 36 investigators who had toured with police in Chicago, the District of Columbia, and Boston. These reports showed that police gave official recognition proportionately more often to felonies than to misdemeanors, that they rarely wrote an official report if the complainant wanted not to prosecute, and that official reports were more likely if the complainant was deferential or a white collar worker. Black's report showed no evidence of racial bias.

Weiner and Willie (1971) investigated the possibility of class or racial bias in the District of Columbia and in Syracuse. In both cities, the rate of police contacts was greater in census tracts that were poorer and had high proportions of blacks; in both cities, the ratio of court referrals to contacts was *not* related to either SES or race.

A somewhat different picture emerged from a study of the files of Lake City, Kansas (Arnold, 1971). Arnold studied the decisions of probation officers to send a youth to court and the decisions of judges to incarcerate. For serious offenses, probation officers and judges seem to have favored the Anglos as compared with their decisions for Latin Americans and Blacks.

More than a little of the accumulated evidence suggested that blacks and the poor might be receiving discriminatory treatment at the hands of the law. Garrett and Short (1975) sought a more direct test of the possibility that the police act upon their stereotypes. In 1964, Garrett and Short asked policemen to make predictions about whether particular boys who had just been caught for the first time would again become officially delinquent. These predictions, descriptions of the juveniles' demeanor, and social class ratings of the neighborhoods in which the boys resided were checked against police records collected in 1970. Although the predictions reflected a tendency among the police to believe that low-status boys were more likely to commit further crimes, most of the relationship between social class and predicted recidivism could be attributed to demeanor. More important, boys judged by the police to be potential recidivists came to the attention of the police more frequently than did boys judged to be nonrepeaters. Although the police may have perceived unknown cues to future behavior, an equally plausible interpretation of the results is that the police collectively shared and acted upon their stereotypes.

Statistics from the National Crime Panel victimization survey provided data for Hindelang (1978) to evaluate racial biases in official offender statistics. Since knowledge of the perpetrator depends on the victim's presence, analyses were restricted to crimes of rape, robbery, and assault. As compared with census distributions of the general population, the victim survey confirmed official offender data in finding an overrepresentation of blacks. In addition, data from victims compared with information from the Uniform Crime Reports revealed biases related to race introduced through processing of some offenses. Black rapists were more likely than white rapists to have their crimes reported to the police; if reported to the police, however, no racial bias appeared in the likelihood for arrest. For the crime of robbery, neither

reporting to police nor arrests appeared to have a racial bias. For aggravated assault, victims were less likely to file a police report if theperpetrator were blackbut, if the crime were reported to the police, blacks were more likely to be arrested. The data indicate that despite biases, differential involvement in crime accounts for most of the differential arrest rates related to race.

Studies of bias in the criminal justice system have uncovered enough to worry those who believe justice should be independent of social circumstances. Yet, the biases do not explain away relationships between delinquency and race or social class.

In 1958, Ivan Nye published results of his study of delinquent behavior as measured by self-report. Nye found no social class differences in the self-reports of delinquency and suggested that "the findings have implications for those etiological studies which rely upon the assumed class differential in delinquent behavior as a basis for a delinquency theory" (Nye, 1958, 31).

Nye's research has served as prototype for many of the subsequent studies and discussions. Nye used information gathered in grades 9 to 12 in three towns in the Pacific Northwest having populations between 10,000 and 30,000 and in three midwestern communities having populations under 2,500. The Nye measure of delinquency included items reporting driving a car without a license, skipping school without a legitimate excuse, and defying parental authority. Critics have questioned the propriety of using small communities as though they represented areas of high crime activity, of basing judgments about teenage delinquency on information provided by nontruanting high school students, and of using minor rule infractions to measure criminal activities.

Even when measured by official court records, data from the Pacific Northwest has shown no impact of social class on delinquency (Polk *et al.*, 1974). It seems possible that high density populations exacerbate social class differences and/or that the Pacific Northwest does not incorporate those features of social class differences that render deprivation oppressive.

To support the criticism that information about delinquency collected from nontruanting high school students would not be representative of delinquent behavior among truants and dropouts, critics cite studies that have demonstrated inverse relationships between school attendance and delinquency (Bachman *et al.*, 1971; Elliott, 1978; Robins, 1966; Robins & Hill, 1966; Wadsworth, 1979; Wolfgang *et al.*, 1972).

Critics of self-report studies also have raised doubts about selective recall and differential honesty (Biderman & Reiss, 1967; Braithwaite, 1981; Clark & Tifft, 1966; Hardt & Peterson-Hardt, 1977; Mawby, 1980; Rathus & Siegel, 1980). Biases from both these sources would tend to magnify the appearance of delinquency where the reality is small. Youths who generally act according to a nondelinquent code of ethics would be more likely to feel guilty about and remember small transgressions; they would also be less likely to lie.

Some measure of the extent to which lying and forgetting occur was shown in a study by Clark and Tifft (1966). They asked 45 male students to respond to 35

questions reporting their own delinquencies; 40 returned for interviews and polygraph tests covering the same items. All 40 changed at least one response, with changes ranging from 3% of the items to 53%. Many of the particularly unreliable items, the authors noted, were among those most commonly used for self-reports of delinquency.

If lying merely reduced the reliability of measures of delinquent behavior, one could be reasonably confident of results that yielded significant relationships between delinquency and other measures of personality. Yet, if distortion of measures of delinquent behavior are systematically related to personality variations, these distortions could produce unwarranted conclusions from studies based on self-reports. Recently, Rathus and Siegel (1980) used the MMPI F-scale to measure exaggeration of delinquent behavior among high school students. With exaggeration controlled, the relationship between delinquency and schizophrenia (Sc-scale) practically disappeared and relationships of delinquency with psychopathy (Pd-scale) and hypomania (Ma-scale) were reduced significantly.

The inclusion of minor rule infractions in measures of delinquent behavior disturbed critics who believed that delinquency might be related to social class even if misbehavior were a permeating phenomenon (Braithwaite, 1981; Elliott & Ageton, 1980; Hindelang, 1978; Hindelang *et al.*, 1979; Reiss, 1976). Studies of decisions by the criminal justice system had shown that repetitive criminal behavior and serious crimes tended to bring a juvenile into the criminal justice system. Some researchers reasoned that self-report measures, which took frequency and severity of criminal behavior into account, could be expected to show distributions similar to those found with official records. For an analysis of this type, Elliott and Ageton (1980) used a national sample of 11- to 17-year olds. The youths reported the number of times during the prior year that they had performed delinquent acts described in 47 items. The authors noted that neither race nor social class appeared to be related to delinquency when respondents were grouped to show whether or not they had committed *any* crimes. Yet, both racial and class differences appeared at the high end of the frequency distribution – among those who reported at least 200 offenses over the year. To equalize weighting of the items, the researchers transformed raw frequencies into standard scores. The means of these scores revealed significant differences by race and by social class for crimes against persons and for total reported delinquency. As the authors noted, their study confirms evidence based on official records showing racial and class differences for serious crimes and frequent violators.

Official records and self-reports have seemed to show both racial and class effects on delinquency. Two factors, however, militate against a conclusion that race should be considered salient: (1) the differences in socioeconomic status among races are not controlled by social class classifications, and (2) there is no evidence to show that middle class blacks are more likely than middle class whites to be delinquents.

Thus, the answer to the question, "Who are delinquents?" seems to be that delinquents are distributed among all classes, but that the lower class commits a disproportionate number of crimes, especially of the more serious types. Most of the

research upon which this conclusion has been based depended on information about boys. Less is known about the crimes of females, though both official records and self-reports indicate that females are less likely than males to violate laws (Hindelang *et al.,* 1979; Jensen & Eve, 1976; Mawby, 1980; Meade, 1973; Richards, 1981; Wadsworth, 1979; Webster, 1979; Weis & Henney, 1980).

Much of the work on measuring delinquency was motivated by attempts to answer the question, "Why is there delinquency?" Although a reconciliation between the use of official records and of self-reports has been effected, the theories that seemed to stand in balance awaiting this reconciliation have not survived the controversy. With various twists, these theories had attributed delinquency to frustrated desires for success/status as defined by middle-class values. The theories imply that delinquent goals should be unrealistically high and that delinquency would be produced by the kinds of events likely to prevent future successes.

Delinquency has not been found to be a consequence of overweening aspirations (Hirschi, 1969; Kelly & Balch, 1971; Polk *et al.,* 1974). Nor is delinquency generated by the frustrations concomitant with dropping out of school. Rather, high rates of delinquency precede dropping out and delinquency rates do not rise after dropping out (Bachman *et al.,* 1971; Bachman *et al.,* 1978; Elliott, 1978).

Other theories about the causes of delinquency have similarly failed to be confirmed by data. Probably the most popular explanation of the last decade has come from labelling theory. According to this theory, the labelling as a deviant creates expectations; these expectations about behavior cause the behavior. More specifically, the theory maintains that the official processing that classical theorists had assumed to be benign produces repetitive delinquency.

In England (Home Office, 1965) and in the United States (Klein, 1974; Lundman, 1976), diversion programs were instituted in order to avoid the stigmatizing effects that official processing was presumed to have. These programs provided bases for assessing the validity of labelling theory.

In the United States, Klein (1974) compared recidivism rates in districts that diverted large proportions of delinquents from the courts with recidivism rates in districts that diverted small proportions. Since the recidivism rates were almost identical for the two groups, Klein concluded that labelling had little effect on recidivism.

In a longitudinal study of London youths, Farrington (1977) discovered that self-reported delinquency among boys who had been first officially labelled as delinquents after the age of 14 was greater than that among boys not so labelled. The difference appeared prior to labelling and increased after labelling. To check whether the apparent increase in delinquent behavior was caused by a reduction in the motivation for concealing delinquencies, Farrington matched the 27 boys who had been convicted between ages 14 and 16 with nonconvicted boys whose self-report scores had been similar at age 14. At age 16, the boys had again completed self-reports with questions the same as those asked 2 years before. A respondent who admitted having committed a delinquent act was asked how old he had been when

he first committed acts of that type. Concealment scores were developed by counting the number of acts admitted during the age 16 reports, which the boy claimed to have first committed prior to age 14, and subtracting those admitted on the questionnaires at age 14. Farrington noted that the comparison between official delinquents and unlabelled delinquents suggests that about half the difference in self-reported delinquency after labelling could be caused by decreased concealment.

In a later study, Farrington and Bennett (1981) traced 907 youths who were under 15 when first arrested in 1973. Two years later, they learned that 25% of those who had received a *caution* had been rearrested. The rearrest rate for those who made a court appearance was 44%. Through home interviews, the researchers gathered information that showed the boys' demeanor gave a better account of the difference between being sent to court and being cautioned than did the demeanors of the parents, academic performance, socioeconomic status, or school behavior. They reanalyzed recidivism rates controlling for the juvenile's demeanor. With demeanor controlled, rearrest rates were *higher* among those who had received cautions than among those who had made court appearances.

Labelling is thought to affect behavior by influencing the way in which one views oneself. Hepburn (1977) sought evidence about delinquent identifications by asking boys to note the frequency (as never, seldom, sometimes, frequently, or always) with which they thought of themselves as delinquent. Boys who had formal police contacts were compared with randomly selected boys of the same age without police contact. The official delinquents were more willing to engage in delinquent activities, more willing to help delinquent others, more likely to believe they would commit additional crimes, and expressed less self-esteem, lower regard for the police, and higher *delinquent identification.* Yet, when Hepburn controlled for pro-delinquent attitudes, the delinquent identification differences between official delinquents and control boys disappeared.

Following Hepburn's article, Jensen (1980) reported on reanalysis of data from the Richmond Youth Study. Jensen assessed the relative impacts on self-image of real delinquency (based on estimates from self-reports) and official labels. After controlling self-reported delinquency, the official label explained only 2% of the variance in self-image. On the other hand, after official labelling was controlled, the self-reports explained 12% of the variance in self-image. Thus, the data suggested that self-image is more responsive to behavior than to label. The impact of the label on self-image appeared to decrease as the individual's actual involvement in delinquency increased.

Chassin *et al.* (1981) assumed that if official processing produced the delinquent self-image, which labelling theory postulated as potent to the development of delinquency, previously incarcerated offenders would be more likely than other offenders to have delinquent self-images. These researchers asked 96 male juvenile offenders recently admitted to a detention center to describe themselves along 11 bipolar dimensions. The dimensions had been selected because discriminant analyses based on responses given by public school youths had identified the dimensions as maximally distinguishing among stereotypes of a popular teenager, a juvenile delinquent, and an emotionally disturbed teenager. The delinquents were classified as having

accepted their labels if their self-concepts were closer to the stereotypes of delinquents or disturbed teenagers than to the stereotype of popular teenager. Otherwise they were considered to be *resisters.* Approximately a third of the delinquents were classified as resisters. The resisters had lower scores on the Pd-scale of the MMPI and their cottage supervisors had (without knowledge of their self-images) classified a higher proportion as unsocialized rather than neurotic or immature. Since the resisters were not less likely to have been previously incarcerated, the authors suggested that official labelling fails to explain differences in self-concepts as delinquent.

The evidence seems to show that labelling theory is wrong. Yet the myriad of interpretations that labelling theorists provide make it difficult to decide that the theory deserves rejection.

Like labelling theory, Freudian theory has generated specific hypotheses about delinquency. On the assumption that aggression is a manifestation of the death instinct, one explanation suggests that crime results from blocked aggression. On the assumption that male superego depends upon introjection of paternal authority, a second explanation implies that criminality is a consequence of maternal domination.

The over-controlled aggressive criminal discussed by Megargee (1966) provides support to the idea that blocked aggression could cause criminal assault. Megargee compared 30 juveniles detained for assaultive behavior with a control group composed of property offenders matched for age, race, and recidivism rate. Case records suggested that the assaultive delinquents had been less aggressive prior to arrest and that they were less aggressive in detention while awaiting trial.

If blocking of aggressive drives causes aggressive outbreaks, however, one would expect to find that relatively few delinquents had been previously aggressive. This expectation is contradicted by the evidence. Several longitudinal studies have shown that aggressive behavior is a precursor of antisocial behavior (McCord *et al.,* 1959; Robins, 1966; Wadsworth, 1979; West & Farrington, 1977). Furthermore, studies measuring effects of the expression of aggression do not show that catharsis reduces hostility (Geen & Quanty, 1977; Goldstein & Arms, 1971; Strauss, 1974; Zillmann, 1979).

An alternative Freudian explanation for delinquency is based on the assumption that males require fathers with whom to identify in order to resolve an Oedipus complex and develop a superego. The Freudian argument implies, therefore, that paternal absence produces delinquents (Fenichel, 1945; Freud, 1905; Meerloo, 1956; Whiting *et al.,* 1958).

The prevalence of broken homes among nonwhites and members of the lower class, those groups who tend to have high rates of delinquency, has not gone unnoticed (Burt, 1925; Glueck & Glueck, 1950; McCord, 1982; Merrill, 1947; Monahan, 1957; Moynihan, 1965; Nye, 1957; Shaw & McKay, 1932; Slawson, 1923; Toby, 1957; Willie, 1967). Nevertheless the evidence shows that paternal absence is not itself criminogenic.

Several studies show that among blacks, crime rates are not higher for those who come from broken homes. In a longitudinal study of black males, Robins and Hill (1966) found that broken homes failed to predict who would become delinquent. Chilton and Markle (1972) discovered a relationship of broken homes to seriousness of crime only among white males – not among blacks or among women. Austin (1978) found broken homes unrelated to crimes among black males and learned that black females from broken homes were *less* likely than those from intact homes to commit thefts.

Similarly, with social class controlled, broken homes do not seem to be related to crime. Studies in England (Gibson, 1969) and in the United States (Chilton & Markle, 1972) have shown that among low-income families, children from broken homes are not more delinquent. In a study of high school students in a midwest suburb, Hennessy, Richards, and Berk (1978) found delinquency unrelated to broken homes. Grinnell and Chambers (1979) discovered that for a sample of Caucasians whose families had incomes of at least $10,000, broken homes explained less than 1% of the variance in crimes committed.

A Freudian interpretation postulates that compensatory masculinity explains why paternal absence leads to crime. Yet, studies in both the United States (Weeks, 1940) and England (Power *et al.*, 1974) found that broken homes were related only to nonserious, status crimes. These types of crimes do not lend themselves to descriptions as compensatory masculinity.

Contrary to Freudian theory, paternal absence as criminogenic seems to depend on what the home was like before and after the break. In one longitudinal study (McCord, 1982), intact families were divided into two groups – tranquil or conflictful; broken homes also were divided into two types – having affectionate or rejecting mothers. Boys reared in broken homes by affectionate mothers were half as likely to be convicted for index crimes as those reared in the midst of conflict by both parents. Although rejecting, broken homes were highly criminogenic, affectionate broken homes were not more criminogenic than tranquil, united homes.

Many studies have shown that antisocial behavior is linked to parental conflict (Baumrind, 1978; Dinitz *et al.*, 1962; Farrington, 1973; McCord, 1979; McCord *et al.*, 1959; Nye, 1957; Power *et al.*, 1974; Rutter, 1971, 1974; West & Farrington, 1973), parental rejection (Austin, 1978; Bachman, 1970; Baumrind, 1978; Bender, 1947; Bowlby, 1940; Dentler & Monroe, 1961; Farrington, 1978; Glueck & Glueck, 1950; Hirschi, 1969; Jensen, 1972; McCord, 1979; McCord *et al.*, 1959; Nye, 1958; Olweus, 1980), parental criminality or alcoholism (Farrington, 1973; Glueck & Glueck, 1950; McCord, 1977; McCord & McCord, 1958), and various types of inadequate discipline (Baumrind, 1978; Bandura & Walters, 1959; Glueck & Glueck, 1950; Hirschi, 1969; Jensen, 1972; McCord, 1979; McCord *et al.*, 1959; Nye, 1958; Olweus, 1980). These relationships appear to be robust across methods for collecting data and across samples.

The discovery of relationships between delinquency and characteristics of family interaction does not quite show why there is delinquency. The categories into which

one places observations already bear the stamp of theory. Particular variables such as maternal affection, parental conflict, role models, and techniques of discipline may be less important to the developing child than other conditions to which these variables are related.

Recent research has demonstrated that altruistic actions as well as aggressive behavior can be taught through films and television (Bandura & Walters, 1963; Berkowitz *et al.*, 1978; Rushton, 1979). Since by definition, altruism is action for the sake of others, not for oneself, this research suggests that a conditioning model of behavior is too restrictive; rewards (even vicarious rewards) seem unnecessary for learning to occur. Research based on alternative models of motivation is likely to enhance understanding of adolescent mental health and behavior.

The final question to be considered in this review asks how delinquency can be stopped. Each theory about the causes of delinquency has carried with it some theory about prevention. Status-frustration theories led to detached-worker programs and boys' club projects; labelling theory created diversion programs; psychoanalytic theory produced attempts to use techniques of catharsis as well as psychotherapy; deprivation theories led to counseling programs. None has yet borne promise of clear success. Indeed, several studies suggest that children who have received counseling or other forms of professional assistance actually have been harmed by the process (Cass & Thomas, 1979; Gersten *et al.*, 1979; Klein, 1971; McCord, 1978; Murray & Cox, 1979; Werner & Smith, 1977). Thus, the safety as well as the efficacy of treatment programs had been questioned, and pilot programs using control groups seem advisable.

Before a punitive policy is adopted as a panacea, it seems wise to test the possible consequences that such action might have. More than a little evidence suggests that the model of giving pain might generate more crime than it would prevent. As LaMar Empey noted in his foreward to *Beyond Probation* (Murray & Cox, 1979), a sharp and clear signal that behavior has been wrong may be the optimum deterrent. This would be consonant with evidence that authoritative parents, according to Baumrind's review (1978), are successful in teaching their children socially responsible behavior.

The consistency with which delinquency has been linked to parental rejection and aggression suggests that training future parents might be effective in preventing delinquency. Such training could address ways of handling frustrations and/or teach young people how to teach their children.

To summarize: Adolescent problems appear to be concentrated among those disadvantaged in other ways. Slight but surely unwarranted biases in the justice system tend to exaggerate disproportionate representation of minority groups and members of the lower class as criminals.

Whereas the evidence about who is delinquent leads to reasonably clear conclusions, the evidence about why there is delinquency has largely failed to support previously entertained beliefs. Studies of aspirations and school dropouts in relation to delinquency have shown that status-frustration yields a poor account of crime. Evidence about self-concept and effects of diversion programs suggest the inadequacies of

labelling theory. Tests of catharsis and of the relationships between broken homes and crime undermine the value of Freudian theory in explaining aggressive behavior.

On the other hand, a variety of measures of parental rejection and parental aggression appear to be consistent in showing a positive correlation with crime. Caution has been recommended for interpreting the relationships.

Perhaps the most significant result of recent research has been the discovery that programs designed to help adolescents actually risk damaging those they are designed to serve. Well-considered professional opinions should not substitute for pilot programs and mandatory evaluations as preliminary steps for instituting larger projects designed to help adolescents.

Summary

Research about the adolescent problem of delinquency can be organized around three questions: Who are delinquents? Why is there delinquency? and How can delinquency be stopped?

Two basic approaches to answering the first question had resulted in conflicting conclusions. Use of official records indicated proportionate overrepresentation of the disadvantaged; use of self-reports failed to confirm the concentration of crime among either the lower classes or minority groups. With attention directed to understanding this disparity, small but disturbing police and court biases were discovered. Problems of differential honesty and recall, though not apparently debilitating, have affected self-report studies; additionally, self-report measures of crime contained distortions so that minor transgressions were confused with major crimes and occasional mischief was confounded with repetitive delinquency. With these defects removed, the self-report technique essentially replicated official records in demonstrating a prevalence of crime in lower classes.

A variety of answers to the second question had been proposed. Theories of delinquency had attributed crime to desires for status that could not be achieved, to labelling that had implied expectations for antisocial actions, to drives and insufficient resolution of the Oedipus Complex, and to psychologically impoverished home environments.

Studies of aspirations and school dropouts have shown, however, that status-frustration yields a poor account of crime. High rates of delinquency precede dropping out of school.

Evidence about self-concepts and effects of diversion programs suggest the inadequacies of labelling theory. Evaluations of diversion programs have not confirmed the assumption that official labelling increases crime, though some evidence suggests that public labelling may reduce the motive of concealment. Studies of self-concepts have failed to link delinquent identities with official processing, although official processing was found to be related to prodelinquent attitudes.

Despite some evidence that *over-control* may produce dangerous aggressive outbursts, longitudinal studies of delinquents show that aggression is a frequent pre-

cursor of criminal behavior. This finding, together with results of studies analyzing effects of paternal absence, provide grounds for judging Freudian assumptions about the causes of delinquency to be wrong.

Investigation of the apparent link between broken homes and crime has shown that this relationship is spurious. Intact homes which are filled with conflict seem to be a greater force in the production of crime.

Studies of the home life of adolescents show that delinquents tend to have rejecting, deviant parents and to be exposed to parental conflict and inadequate discipline. These results are robust across methods and samples. Further research should be aimed at learning why these backgrounds contribute to delinquency.

Perhaps the most significant finding in recent research came from studies evaluating attempts to stop delinquency. Each theory about the causes of delinquency had carried with it some theory about prevention. Evaluations of the intervention strategies indicated that none showed consistent beneficial results. More important, several studies suggested that clients who received counseling or other forms of professional assistance risked being harmed by the process. Preliminary evidence suggests that a punitive policy might increase – rather than decrease – criminality. Therefore, before a crime prevention program is instituted on a large scale, pilot projects which have been evaluated for safety as well as efficacy should be required.

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